



**Senator Feinstein Urges President Bush to Crack Down
on Illegal Drug Trade in Afghanistan**
November 19, 2004

Washington, DC – Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today called on President Bush to devote more resources to combat Afghan heroin production so that proceeds from illicit drug sales cannot be used to fund terrorists wishing to harm the United States.

A report released today by the Office of National Drug Control Policy indicates that opium crops this year will increase more than 200 percent over 2003 estimates.

Following is a copy of the letter that Senator Feinstein sent to President Bush today:

November 19, 2004

President George Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to express my increasing concern about the state of opium production in Afghanistan, and to implore you to devote more resources – both diplomatically and militarily - to helping the Afghan government stem the now almost overwhelming tide of heroin coming from that nation.

According to an ONDCP report released just today, “approximately 206,700 hectares of poppy were cultivated during the crop season in 2004. Current cultivation levels equate to a potential production of 4,950 metric tons of opium. This represents a 239 percent increase in the poppy crop and a 73 percent increase in potential opium production over 2003 estimates.”

If true, these estimates represent staggeringly high production levels in Afghanistan – more than four times the production level in 1999, and more than 120 times the level of production in 2001, the last year of Taliban control.

In past briefings on this issue, we were assured first that our military would eradicate the poppy fields and destroy any stockpiled supplies of opium – stockpiles, we were told, that our military had already targeted and would know where to find. Then, we were assured that every effort would be made to work with the new Afghan government to limit production and stop the drug trade.

Now, more than three years after going into Afghanistan, it seems like our government has allowed Afghanistan to become an even greater source of heroin production than ever before. Inevitably, much of the profits from this newly invigorated drug trade will flow to terrorists who wish to do us harm.

Put simply, this situation is simply unacceptable.

As I have written you in the past, if we cannot control illicit drug production within a country occupied by our own military, we cannot possibly expect to control illegal drugs anywhere. Allowing Afghanistan to once again become the world's largest producer of opium puts that nation at continued risk of instability, and puts our own nation at continued risk of future, drug-funded terrorism.

Please let me know how you intend to handle this situation, as soon as possible. You know better than anyone that the war against terrorism must be fought on many fronts, and it seems very clear to me that this is one key front in that war – a front that has received too little attention.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

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